What is claimed is:

1. A water-soluble ionic cellulose ether from the group of hydroxyalkylcelluloses which is substituted by on average from 0.001 to 1.0 alkyl group per anhydroglucose unit and which carries from 0.01 to 0.1 sulfoalkyl group per anhydroglucose unit.

2. A cellulose ether as claimed in claim 1, wherein the average number of alkyl groups per anhydroglucose unit is from 0.001 to 0.2.

3. A cellulose ether as claimed in claim 1, of the formula

$$[C_6H_7O_2(OR^1)(OR^2)(OR^3)]_m$$

where $C_6H_7O_2$ is an anhydroglucose unit,

m is 50 - 3000,

and R^1, R^2, R^3 independently of one another are each a polyalkylene oxide chain of the formula

$$-[(C_2H_4O)_p\ (CH_2\underset{\displaystyle CH_3}{\underset{|}{CH}}\text{-}O)_q\ (CH_2\ \underset{\displaystyle OH}{\underset{|}{CH}}\text{-}CH_2O)_r]\text{-}X$$

where X = H, C_nH_{2n+1}, $C_nH_{2n+1}O$, CH_2-CH_2-SO_3Y or CH_2-CHOH-CH_2SO_3Y,

n = 4 – 20

and Y = H, Na or K,

and in which

p, q, and r independently of one another in R^1, R^2 and R^3 can each independently assume values from 0 to 4, the sum of all (p+q+r) added over R^1, R^2 and R^3 per anhydroglucose unit is on average greater than 1.3 and less than 4.5, the sequence of the oxyalkylene units in the polyalkylene oxide chain is arbitrary, and the average number of hydrophobically modified groups per anhydroglucose unit (DS HM) is from 0.001 to 0.2, and the average number of sulfoalkyl groups per anhydroglucose unit is from 0.01 to 0.1.

4. A cellulose ether as claimed in claim 1, wherein the average number of hydrophobically modified groups per anhydroglucose unit (DS HM) is from 0.01 to 0.04.

5. A cellulose ether as claimed in claim 1, wherein the average number of sulfoalkyl groups per anhydroglucose unit is from 0.01 to 0.09.

6. A cellulose ether as claimed in claim 1, wherein the sulfoalkyl groups are sulfoethyl groups.

7. A process for preparing a cellulose ether as claimed in claim 1 by etherifying cellulose with an etherifying agent from the group of alkylene oxides and etherifying with an alkyl halide or an alkyl glycidyl ether and a sulfonate, with base catalysis.

8. A process for preparing a cellulose ether as claimed in claim 1 by etherifying cellulose ethers from the group of hydroxyalkylcelluloses with an alkyl halide or an alkyl glycidyl ether and a sulfonate, with base catalysis.

9. An emulsion paint comprising one or more water-soluble ionic cellulose ethers from the group of hydroxyalkylcelluloses which are substituted by on average from 0.001 to 1.0 alkyl group per anhydroglucose unit and which carry from 0.01 to 0.4 sulfoalkyl group per anhydroglucose unit.

10. A method of using a water soluble ionic cellulose ether from the group of hydroxyalkylcelluloses which is substituted by on average from 0.001 to 1.0 alkyl group per anhydroglucose unit and which carries from 0.01 to 0.4 sulfoalkyl group per anhydroglucose unit in an emulsion paint.